THE LABOUR FORCE SURVEY

BACKGROUND AND EXPLANATION

ALBERTA HUMAN RESOURCES & EMPLOYMENT

104-05769/

THE LABOUR FORCE SURVEY

The Labour Force Survey is the primary source of statistics on employment and unemployment in Canada and the provinces. Of all federal statistics, the unemployment rate is one of the most generally reflective of the economic health of an economy and its labour market.

This guide outlines the definitions and concepts used by the Survey and introduces the monthly briefing package. The last three sections cover the industrial and occupational classification systems used by the Labour Force Survey.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Section 1: The Labour Force Survey.....3

1.1 Brief Description of the Survey..... 3
1.2 Data Collection and Release Dates.....4
1.3 Definitions.....5
1.4 Industry and Occupation..... 8
1.5 Seasonal Adjustment.....9
1.6 Reliability of Estimates.....9

Section 2: Monthly Briefing Material on the Labour Force Survey.....11

2.1 Labour Force Statistics Highlight Sheet.....12
2.2 Public Package: Labour Force Statistics.....12
2.3 Briefing Package: Labour Force Statistics.....12
2.4 Appendix: Historical Labour Force Statistics.....12

Section 3: Background Papers – Industrial and Occupational Classifications.....13

3.1 1997 North American Industry Classification System..... ...13
3.2 1991 Standard Occupation Classification System.....20

Section 4: FAQ's.....24

Appendix A: Related Charts and Graphs.....27

Employment by Industry, Alberta
Employment by Occupation, Alberta
Employment Rate, Canada and Provinces
Full-Time and Part-Time Employment, Alberta
Unemployment Rate, Canada and Provinces
Participation Rate, Canada and Provinces
Employment, Alberta, Seasonally Adjusted & Unadjusted
Unemployment Rate, Alberta, Seasonally Adjusted & Unadjusted

1.0 THE LABOUR FORCE SURVEY

1.1 Brief Description of the Labour Force Survey

The Labour Force Survey is the primary source of statistics on employment and unemployment in Canada. Results of this Survey are extremely timely as estimates for a particular month are available within the first two weeks of the following month. An understanding of the design of the Survey will assist in recognizing the limitations of the Survey and in interpreting the statistics that it produces.

The Labour Force Survey (LFS) is conducted monthly with almost 54,000 households in all 10 provinces being surveyed. In Alberta, some 4,100 households are surveyed.

The Survey covers persons in the population who are 15 years or age and older in Canada. Excluded from the Survey are residents of the Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut, persons living on Indian reserves, inmates of institutions, and full-time members of the Canadian Armed Forces.

The Survey collects information on the work activities of the respondents during the week containing the **15**th day of the month. This is known as the **reference week**.

1.2 Data Collection and Release Dates

Data collection is carried out during the week following the reference week. Statistics Canada interviewers contact each of the dwellings in the sample through personal and/or telephone interviews to obtain the information needed to produce the labour force data. The data are released on the first or second Friday of the following month. The next eight release dates for the Labour Force Survey are as follows:

Reference Month	Release Date of Labour Force Package
January 2003	February 7, 2003
February 2003	March 7, 2003
March 2003	April 4, 2003
April 2003	May 9, 2003
May 2003	June 6, 2003
June 2003	July 11, 2003
July 2003	August 8, 2003
August 2003	September 5, 2003

1.3 Definitions

Working Age Population

The working age population is composed of those persons 15 years of age and over, except for residents of the Yukon and Northwest Territories, persons living on Indian reserves, inmates of institutions, and full-time members of the Canadian Armed Forces.

Alberta's working age population averaged 2,420,600 in 2002

Labour Force

The labour force is composed of that portion of the working age population who, during the reference week, were employed or unemployed. The reference week is defined as the week containing the 15th day of the month in which information is collected for the Labour Force Survey.

In 2002, Alberta's labour force averaged 1,767,500

Employed

Employed persons are those who, during the reference week:

1. Did any work at all at a job or a business
2. Had a job but were not at work due to own illness or disability, personal or family responsibilities, bad weather, labour dispute, and vacation.

Persons on layoff and persons who are to start a new job in the future are excluded.

Work includes activities carried out for pay or profit; that is , paid work in the context of an employer-employee relationship, or self-employment. It also includes unpaid family work which is defined as a direct contribution to the operation of a farm, business or professional practice owned or operated by a related member of the household.

The number of Albertans employed in 2002 averaged 1,673,800

Unemployed

Unemployed persons are those, who during the reference week:

1. Were without work, had actively looked for work in the past four weeks (ending with the reference week), and were available for work;
2. Were on temporary layoff during the reference week with an expectation of recall and were available for work;
3. Had a new job to start within four weeks from the reference week, and were available for work.

In 2002, an average of 93,700 Albertans were unemployed

There are three types of unemployment. They are as follows:

A. **Cyclical Unemployment**

Temporary downturn in the job market. The most common form of cyclical unemployment occurs when workers are temporarily laid off.

B. **Frictional Unemployment**

Frictional unemployment occurs when participants in the labour force change their job status. This includes people between jobs and new labour force entrants such as those returning to the labour force after completing school or raising children.

C. **Structural Unemployment**

Where workers are unable to fill available jobs because they lack the necessary skills, do not live where jobs are available or are unwilling to work at the wage rate offered in the market.

Unemployment Rate

The unemployment rate represents the number of unemployed persons expressed as a percentage of the labour force.

In 2002, Alberta's average unemployment rate was 5.3%

Participation Rate

The participation rate represents the total labour force expressed as a percentage of the working age population (persons 15 years of age and older). The participation rate represents the proportion of the working age population is either employed or actively seeking employment.

In 2002, Alberta's participation rate averaged 73.0%, the highest of all the provinces in Canada.

Employment Rate

The employment rate represents the number of persons employed expressed as a percentage of the working age population (persons 15 years of age and older).

The employment rate reflects, to a certain extent, the state of an economy. A high employment rate indicates the ability of an economy to create jobs and to employ a large percent of its working age population.

Alberta leads the country in having the highest proportion of its working age population employed. In 2002, Alberta's employment rate averaged at 69.1%.

Full-Time and Part-Time

Full-time employment consists of persons who usually work 30 hours or more per week at their **main** or **only** job.

Part-time employment consists of all other persons who usually work less than 30 hours per week.

In 2002, full-time employment averaged approximately 82.0% of the total employed; part time employment, approximately 18.0%.

Goods-Producing Sector

Includes agriculture; forestry, fishing, mining, and oil and gas extraction; utilities (electric, power, gas, and water); construction; and manufacturing.

Service-Producing Sector

Includes trade; transportation and warehousing; finance, insurance, real estate and leasing; professional, scientific and technical services; management, administrative and other support; educational services; healthcare and social assistance; information, culture and recreation; accommodation and food services; other services; and public administration.

1.4 Industry and Occupation

The Labour Force Survey provides information about the occupation and industry of the employed and unemployed. For the employed, data on the industry and occupation of the current job are provided; for the unemployed, data on the industry and occupation of the last job held are provided. The **1997 North American Industry Classification System (NAICS)** and the **1991 Standard Occupation Classification (SOC)** are used to code the data. A more detailed description of these two classification systems is provided in "Industry and Occupation Classification Systems used by the Labour Force Survey" in Section 3.1 of this guide.

1.5 Seasonal Adjustment

Fluctuations in employment, labour force and unemployment estimates can be caused by seasonal movements, cyclical movements or by sample error. A seasonally- adjusted series is one from which seasonal movements have been eliminated. Seasonal movements are defined as those which are caused by regular annual events, such as climate, crop cycles, holidays and vacation periods. It should be noted that seasonally-adjusted series may still contain irregular movements or variations due to sampling error, as well as longer-term cyclical fluctuations. These results are due to the impact of the business cycle.

In making comparisons over time, it is more appropriate to use seasonally adjusted statistics rather than the **unadjusted (actual)** statistics. Seasonal events such as spring break-up, seeding and harvesting times, summer job creation, and the Christmas season can have a dramatic effect on the level of employment. With these effects being removed by the process of seasonal adjustment, changes in the statistics can be interpreted more realistically.

For example, monthly unadjusted (actual) employment figures normally peak during the summer period but drop to the lowest levels of the year in the winter months. The seasonal adjustment process would lower the unadjusted employment figures for the summer months but increase them during the winter period.

Similarly, unadjusted unemployment rates for the summer months would be increased by the seasonal adjustment process but reduced somewhat during the winter.

Unfortunately, seasonal adjustment cannot be applied on regional or sub-provincial labour data series. Because of the small sample size of most regional areas, sub-provincial labour market statistics do not show enough variations for seasonal adjustment.

As a rule of thumb, for short term analysis, research institutions and the media focus mainly on the adjusted figures.

1.6 Reliability of Estimates

Statistics produced by the Labour Force Survey are subject to two types of error: sampling and non-sampling errors.

Estimates from the Labour Force Survey are based on a sample of households. If, however, a complete census or full count were undertaken using the same questionnaires, interviewers, and processing methods, the results produced could be somewhat different than those produced from the sample survey. The difference is called the sampling error.

Sampling error is not the same for all estimates. Of two estimates, the larger one will likely have a smaller percent sampling error. For these reasons, estimates of employment levels are more reliable or accurate than estimates of unemployment which are smaller in size.

Similarly, estimates of employment by industry, occupation, region or city are subject to a higher amount of variability because they are generally represented in small numbers.

In recent years, in response to budget restraint, Statistics Canada has reduced the number of households covered in the monthly survey. This has somewhat reduced the reliability of sub-provincial, industry and occupational estimates.

To avoid making erroneous interpretation of monthly statistics, Statistics Canada has suggested that estimates that are based on three-month moving averages should be used whenever possible.

Non-sampling errors are normally the result of human errors. Interviewers may misunderstand instructions; respondents may provide wrong answers; and the answers may be incorrectly entered on the questionnaire, or processed incorrectly.

Because of the existence of these two types of errors, the monthly changes in labour force statistics reflect not only changes in the economy, but also the errors that are inherent in the estimates. It is therefore unwise to draw conclusions based on variations from one month to the next.

A useful rule of thumb is to observe the statistics over a three-month period. If increases or decreases occur consistently over three consecutive months, it is safe to conclude that a trend may have developed due to changes in economic conditions.

2.0 MONTHLY BRIEFING MATERIAL ON THE LABOUR FORCE SURVEY

This section presents examples of the material which the Performance and Applied Research Branch compiles monthly for the use of the Premier, the Minister, the Cabinet, Members of the Caucus, departmental officials, and the general public. Bellow is a list of the briefing material contained in the Labour Force Statistics Package:

- Labour Force Statistics Highlight Sheet
- Public Package- Labour Force Statistics
- Briefing Package- Labour Force Statistics
- Appendix- Historical Labour Force Statistics

2.1 Labour Force Statistics Highlight Sheet

On the morning of the release of the Labour Force Survey data, a brief analytical highlight sheet is prepared based upon the data contained in the various reports pertaining to the Labour Force Survey. This release, in addition to the other briefing material, is normally emailed to stakeholders by 8:00 am and posted on the AHR&E website and can be obtained at this address: **http://www3.gov.ab.ca/hre/lfstats.htm**

2.2 Public Package- Labour Force Statistics

This two-page report is distributed through email to the media and the general public. Statistics in this report are kept to a minimum in order to minimize misinterpretation. This report is also posted on the AHR&E website.

2.3 Briefing Package- Labour Force Statistics

This 14-page report is intended for use by the Cabinet, members of the government caucus, and government researchers. This report provides detailed statistics on the Province and its regions. Labour force statistics on other provinces and metropolitan centres are also provided. In addition, the report incorporates graphs to illustrate both current and historical labour market conditions.

Members of the Cabinet receive their labour force package on the morning of the Labour Force Release date by email.

2.4 Appendix- Historical Labour Force Statistics

This section contains historical labour force statistics, both monthly and annual averages, dating as far back as January 1989. In addition, this section provides month-over-month and year-over-year changes in the statistics. This package is distributed to a limited audience consisting mainly of government employees.

3.0 Background Papers: Industrial and Occupational Classifications

3.1 1997 North American Industrial Classification System (NAICS) and the 1991 Standard Occupation Classification (SOC)

Information on labour force activity is available at the industry and occupation level. These statistics are available both by general and more detailed industrial and occupational groupings.

Industry refers to the nature of the economic activity carried out in an establishment. Generally, an establishment is a producing unit; and industry is a group of establishments engaged in similar types of activities producing similar goods and services.

The industry groupings in the Labour Force Survey are based on the **1997 North American Industry Classification System (NAICS).** This is a classification system adopted by Canada, the United States, and Mexico to facilitate comparisons of economic trends by field of industrial activity as a result of the North American Free Trade Agreement. The NAICS divides industries into the following eighteen sectors:

1. Agriculture
2. Forestry, Fishing and Trapping
3. Mining and Oil and Gas Extraction
4. Utilities
5. Construction
6. Manufacturing
7. Wholesale Trade
8. Retail Trade
9. Transportation and Warehousing
10. Finance, Insurance, Real Estate and Leasing
11. Professional, Scientific and Technical Services
12. Management, Administrative and Other Support
13. Education Services
14. Health Care and Social Assistance
15. Information, Culture and Recreation
16. Accommodation and Food Services
17. Other Services
18. Public Administration

Each of these eighteen major groups can be broken down further into more detailed and related industries.

1. The **Agriculture** industry consists of Crop Production and Animal Production. Examples of Crop Production include oilseed and grain farming; fruit and tree nut farming; and greenhouse, nursery and floriculture production. Animal Production includes cattle ranching and farming; hog and pig farming; poultry and egg production.

In 2002, there was an annual average of 61,300 employed in Agriculture in Alberta.

2. The **Forestry and Logging with Support Activities** industry consists of firms engaged in activities such as producing round wood, barking mills, forest nurseries, reforestation and other forest services, commercial fishing, fish farming, and hunting and trapping wild animals for furs and skins.

Forestry and Logging employed an annual average of 3,600 Albertans in 2002.

3. The **Mining and Oil and Gas Extraction** industry consists of the following three groups:
    i) Oil and Gas Extraction
    ii) Mining (except Oil and Gas)
    iii) Support Activities for Mining and Oil and Gas Extraction

Oil and Gas extraction includes firms engaged in operating oil and gas field properties. It also includes firms engaged in the exploration for crude petroleum and natural gas; drilling; production of oil; and the mining and extraction of oil from oil shale and oil sands.

Mining (except Oil and Gas) includes establishments engaged in mining, beneficiating or otherwise preparing metallic and non-metallic minerals, including coal.

Support Activities for Mining and Oil and Gas Extraction include firms engaged in providing support services on a contract or fee basis required for the mining and quarrying of minerals and for the extraction of oil and gas. Firms engaged in the exploration for minerals, other than oil and gas, are included.

In 2002, an annual average of 90,100 were employed in the Mining and Oil and Gas extraction industry.

4. The **Utilities** industry comprises establishments engaged in operating electric, gas, and water utilities. These firms generate, transmit, control, and distribute electric power; distribute natural gas; treat and distribute water; operate sewer systems and sewage treatment facilities.

The Utilities industry employed an annual average of 17,400 Albertans in 2002.

5. The **Construction** industry comprises establishments engaged in constructing, repairing and renovating buildings and engineering works and in subdividing and developing land. The two major detailed groupings used by the Labour Force Survey consist of Prime Contracting and Trade Contracting.

Prime Contracting consists of firms which bid on contracts let by principals; they assume responsibility for completing the structure but not for its sale. They undertake the construction activity, as distinct from doing design work, project financing, and building operation.

Trade Contracting includes establishments engaged in supplying their specialized service under contract to a general contractor. Roof shingling and concrete pouring and finishing are examples of Trade Contracting industries.

In 2002, an annual average of 139,700 Albertans were employed in the Construction industry.

6. The **Manufacturing** industry consists of numerous sub-industries involved in processing or manufacturing products. Below is a listing of all these sub-industries:

1. Food and beverage
2. Textiles, clothing and leather
3. Wood products
4. Paper products
5. Printing and related support activities
6. Petroleum and coal products
7. Chemical products
8. Plastics and rubber products
9. Non-metallic mineral products
10. Primary metal mineral products
11. Fabricated metal products
12. Machinery manufacturing
13. Electronic and electrical products

14. Transportation equipment
15. Furniture and related products
16. Miscellaneous manufacturing

The Manufacturing industry posted an annual average of 147,100 people in 2002.

7. The **Wholesale Trade** industry consists of establishments primarily engaged in wholesaling merchandise and providing related logistics, marketing and support services to retailers, industrial, commercial, institutional, farm or business users or other wholesalers, or operate as agents or brokers in buying or selling on commission.

In 2002, Wholesale Trade employed an annual average of 60,300 people.

8. The **Retail Trade** establishments primarily buy for resale to the general public for personal or household use or provide related services such as installation and repair. Examples of Retail Trade industries include stores selling drugs, computers, and cars.

Retail trade is the largest employer in Alberta; it had an annual average of 192,600 in 2002.

9. The **Transportation and Warehousing** industry comprises establishments engaged in transporting passengers and goods, warehousing and storing goods and providing services to these establishments. The modes of transportation are road, rail, water, air, and pipeline. National post office and courier establishments, which also transport goods, are included in this sector.

In 2002, the Transportation and Warehousing employment annual average was 98,800 Albertans.

10. The **Finance, Insurance, Real Estate and Leasing** industry consists of establishments engaged in accepting deposits, extending loans, investing in securities, and underwriting and selling all kinds of insurance. It also includes establishments engaged in renting, leasing, buying and selling, managing and appraising real estate. Examples include chartered banks, trust companies, consumer loan companies, venture capital companies, investment companies, life insurers, stock brokers, and condominium management.

An annual average of 84,500 Albertans were employed in the Finance, Insurance, Real Estate and Leasing industry in 2002.

11. The **Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services** industry comprises establishments engaged in activities in which human capital is the major input. The components of this sector include legal services; accounting; architectural; engineering; surveying and mapping; design services; management; computer systems design; environmental consulting; scientific and technical consulting services; scientific research and development; and advertising services.

In 2002, an annual average of 121,700 people were employed in the Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services industry.

12. The **Management, Administrative, and Other Support** industry consists of establishments involved in managing companies and/or holding the securities or financial assets of companies for the purpose of owning a controlling interest in them. Also included are firms that provide the day to day support operations of other organizations; and those engaged in waste management activities.

    Examples include employment agencies, temporary help services, document preparation services, telephone call centres, collection agencies, tour operators, investigation and security services, janitorial services, window cleaning services, landscaping services, waste collection, and all other waste management services.

The Management, Administrative, and Other Support industry employed an annual average of 57,400 Albertans in 2002.

13. The **Education Services** industry comprises establishments engaged in providing instruction and training in a wide variety of subjects. These establishments may be privately owned or publicly owned and operated.

In 2002, employment in Education Services was an annual average of 105,200.

14. The **Health Care and Social Assistance** industry comprises establishments engaged in providing health care through diagnosis and treatment; providing residential care for medical and social reasons; and providing social assistance. This includes counseling; welfare; child protection; community housing and food services; vocational rehabilitation; and child care to those requiring such assistance.

In 2002, Health Care and Social Assistance employed an annual average of 158,500 Albertans.

15. The **Information, Culture, and Recreation** industry comprises two industries: Information and Cultural industries, and the Arts and Entertainment industry. Examples of establishments included in this sector are firms engaged in publishing newspapers, books, and software; and motion picture and sound recording.

Employment in the Information, Culture, and Recreation industry in 2002 was an annual average of 68,300.

16. The **Accommodation and Food Services** industry comprises establishments engaged in providing short-term lodging in facilities such as hotels, resorts, campgrounds, and various types of recreational and adventure camps. This sector also includes establishments engaged in preparing meals, snacks, and beverages.

In 2002, an annual average of 119,200 Albertans were employed in this industry.

17. The **Other Services** industry consists of establishments engaged in repairing or maintaining: motor vehicles, machinery, equipment and other products; providing personal services; organizing/promoting religious activities; and promoting/advocating causes in various organizations and associations.

The Other Services industry had an employment annual average of 81,000 people in 2002.

18. The **Public Administration** industry consists of establishments engaged in governmental activities such as national defence and public safety. It also includes establishments that support or regulate non-governmental establishments.

Public Administration can be broken down into the following three detailed industry groups:

i) Federal Public Administration

ii) Provincial Public Administration

iii) Local, Municipal, and Regional Public Administration

Examples of occupations that fall within Public Administration include the Supreme Court under Federal Administration; Detention Centres and Child Welfare Services under Provincial Administration; and the Municipal Police Force, and the Community Health Services under Local Administration. The Labour Force Survey excludes the Armed Forces in its survey.

In 2002, an annual average of 67,000 Albertans worked in Public Administration.

3.2 1991 Standard Occupation Classification System

Occupation refers to the kind of work performed grouped according to the task, duties and responsibilities involved. Generally, occupations with similar work activities are grouped together. The occupation classification used in the Labour Force Survey is based on the **1991 Standard Occupational Classification (S.O.C.)**. The major occupations used by the Labour Force Survey package are the following ten groups:

1) Management
2) Business, Finance and Administrative
3) Natural and Applied Sciences
4) Health
5) Social Sciences, Education, Government and Religion
6) Art, Culture, Recreation and Sport
7) Sales and Services
8) Trades, Transport and Equipment Operator
9) Occupations unique to Primary Industry
10) Occupations unique to Processing, Manufacturing and Utilities

1. **Management Occupations:** Occupations in this broad category are concerned with carrying out the functions of management by planning, organizing, directing, controlling, staffing, formulating, and implementing policy, either directly or through other levels of management.

Examples include legislators and senior government officials; middle management; managers of hotels; and occupations closely related to management and administration such as government administrators, general managers, accountants, auditors and financial officers and union representatives.

In 2002, employment in Management Occupations was an annual average of 152,000.

2. **Business, Finance and Administrative Occupations:** Occupations in this broad category are concerned with providing financial and business services; administrative and regulatory services; and clerical support services.

Examples include financial auditors and accountants, insurance underwriters, property

administrators, human resources professionals, secretaries, library clerks, couriers and messengers, and shippers and receivers.

In 2002, an annual average of 290,900 were employed in Business, Finance and Administrative Occupations.

3. **Natural and Applied Sciences Occupations:** Occupations in this category are concerned with conducting theoretical and applied research, and providing technical support in natural and applied sciences. Examples include physicists, chemists, biologists, geologists, engineers, technologists, and industrial designers.

In 2002, an annual average of 125,900 Albertans were employed in Natural and Applied Sciences Occupations.

4. **Health Occupations:** Occupations in this category are concerned with providing health care services directly to patients and providing support to health care delivery. Examples include doctors, dentists, specialist physicians, pharmacists, physiotherapists, nurses, medical laboratory technologists, ambulance attendants, and other occupations that are in support of health services.

An annual average of 83,900 Albertans were employed in Health Occupations in 2002.

5. **Social Science, Education, Government Service and Religion Occupations:** Occupations in this broad occupational category are concerned with law, teaching, counseling, conducting social science research, providing religious services, and developing and administering government policies and programs.

   Examples include judges, lawyers, psychologists, family and marriage counselors, economists, social workers, teachers, professors, employment counselors.

Employment in Social Science, Education, Government Service and Religion Occupations was an annual average of 114,500 in 2002.

6. **Art, Culture, Recreation and Sport Occupations:** Occupations in this category are concerned with providing artistic and cultural services, and providing direct support to the service providers.

   Examples include archivists; journalists; writers; musicians and singers; photographers; audio and video recording technicians; athletes; coaches; and interior designers.

In 2002, an annual average of 34,400 were employed in the Art, Culture, Recreation and Sport Occupations.

7. **Sales and Service Occupations:** Occupations in this grouping are concerned with selling goods and services and providing personal; protective; household; and tourism and hospitality services.

   Examples include wholesales trade sales representatives; retail salespersons and sales clerks; real estate brokers; chefs and cooks; bartenders and waiters; police officers; firefighters; security guards; housekeepers; hairdressers and barbers; butchers and meat cutters; and funeral directors.

In 2002, an annual average 414,700 Albertans worked in Sales and Service Occupations.

8. **Trades, Transport and Equipment Operators and Related Occupations:**
   Occupations in this category are concerned with contracting, supervising and doing trades work; and supervising and operating transportation equipment and heavy equipment.

   Examples include plumbers; electricians, telecommunications installation and repair workers; tool and die makers; truck drivers; and railway and motor transport workers.

In 2002, an annual average of 270,300 Albertans were employed in Trades, Transport and Equipment Operators and Related Occupations.

9. **Occupations Unique to Primary Industry:** Occupations in this category are concerned with operating farms and supervising or doing farm work; operating fishing vessels and doing specialized fishing work; and in doing supervision and production work in oil and gas production and forestry and logging.

   Examples include farmers and farm managers; nursery and greenhouse operators; logging and forestry workers; oil and gas well drillers; underground mine service and support workers; and landscaping and grounds maintenance labourers.

In 2002, an annual average of 100,500 Albertans worked in Occupations Unique to Primary Industry.

10. **Occupations Unique to Processing, Manufacturing and Utilities:** Occupations in this category are engaged in processing metals, petroleum, chemicals, rubber and plastics, food and beverage, forest products, and textiles. They are also concerned with workers engaged in assembly and fabrication of transportation equipment, machinery electronic equipment, electrical products, and furniture and fixtures. Workers in this group are also engaged in performing material handling, clean-up, packaging, and other elemental activities in processing, manufacturing and utilities.

In 2002, an annual average of 86,700 Albertans were employed in Occupations Unique to Processing, Manufacturing and Utilities.

4.0 Frequently Asked Questions

1) Why does that government collect labour force statistics?

Labour force statistics are used by a variety of consumers. The statistics measure economic activity and the overall health of the economy. It measures how many workers are employed and unemployed, along with the productivity of the workforce. It can be used to create forecasts to address needs in the future.

2) How are the statistics gathered?

The labour force survey is conducted every month, surveying approximately 54,000 households in 10 provinces. Statistics Canada interviewers contact dwellings during the reference week which contains the 15th day of the month. The samples are collected through personal and/or telephone interviews obtain the data.

3) What components make up the labour force?

The labour force is made up of two components. They are the employed and the unemployed.

4) Who is not in the labour force?

The portion of the population that is under 15 years of age is not part of the labour force. Also not included are those that are 15 years and older who do not have a job and are not actively seeking employment. Lastly, residents of the Yukon and Northwest Territories, people living on Indian Reserves, inmates of institutions, and full-time members of the Canadian Armed Forces are not considered part of the labour force.

5) Who is counted as employed? Who is counted as unemployed?

People are counted as employed if during the reference week they did any work at all at a job or business; or if they had a job but were not at work due to an illness, disability, maternity or paternity leave, personal or family responsibility, bad weather, labour dispute, or a vacation. People are classified as unemployed if during the reference week they did not have a job, were on temporary lay-off, but were available for work.

6) Is frictional unemployment primarily voluntary?

Yes, it is considered voluntary because people chose to leave for personal reason, or to find better work. (Frictional unemployment occurs when participants in the labour force change their job status. This includes people between jobs and new labour force entrants such as those returning to the labour force after completing school or raising children).

7) Is some unemployment a good thing?

In fact yes. An unemployment rate of 5% is considered healthy for a region. Otherwise the job market is too tight and labour shortages can arise. A labour shortage is indicated when the unemployment rate is lower than 3%.

8) Why don't the employment rate and unemployment rate add up to 100?

The employment rate is the percentage of the working age population that is employed, while the unemployment rate is the percentage of the labour force that is unemployed. The working age population and the labour force do not equal because there are people in working age population that are unwilling or unable to offer labour services.

9) What is the difference between unadjusted and seasonally adjusted data?

During the year, the number of employed and unemployed persons fluctuates in a pattern that tends to repeat itself year after year. The pattern reflects holidays, starting and ending of the school year, vacations, and weather. Due to these seasonal occurrences it is difficult to determine whether developments between any two months reflect economic conditions or merely seasonal fluctuations. The statistical technique called seasonal adjustment is used to smooth out normal seasonal fluctuations so that data for a month can be meaningfully compared to data of a different month.

10) Can we get information for smaller counties/towns (i.e. Brooks, Stony Plain, Boyle, Rosemary, etc)?

No, information on smaller towns is not accessible due to their small sample size. Sample sizes under 1500 are suppressed as anything under this amount is too small to produce reliable results.

11) How can labour force information help job seekers?

Labour Force information can help job seekers analyze the labour market in which they reside. Prospective job seekers can find out which occupations are in demand and which ones will be in demand in the future. Trends from LFS data can also help us assess what is likely to occur in the future.

12) What are the benefits of labour force statistics to employers, educators, etc.?

Employers can use Labour Force Statistics to find out the availability of workers, local and national economic conditions, and/or the need for expansion or downsizing. Educators can use these statistics as one indicator of what jobs are in demand, where these jobs will be located, the training and skill requirements of these jobs, and which jobs will be in demand in the future.